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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 5:1-18

“The Healing of the Impotent Man”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, let's turn to John chapter 5 and read for our Scripture reading verses 1 through 18. Verse 1 through verse 18,

“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. (If you have a Bible with marginal notes, you will notice that there is some problem with the term Bethesda. Some of the ancient manuscripts have other forms like Bethsaida, Bethzatha and even some other forms than that. So evidently there was some confusion in the early days of the copying of the manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. But the text I'm reading, the New American Standard Bible has “Bethesda, having five porticoes.” And that may well be the correct reading). In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered (Now, in the New American Standard Bible the 4th verse found in the Authorized Version is not found. If you have the Authorized Version, you have something like this in the end of the 3rd verse), [waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] (Again, the manuscript testimony for that verse is relatively weak and it is probably not in the original text that John wrote. It was inserted evidently by

a scribe later on to explain the following). For the sick man answers (in the 7th verse), ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up (And so a scribe supplied that in the copying of ancient manuscripts somewhere and it has been copied in some of the manuscripts since, but probably is not a genuine part of the Gospel of John).’”

As you know in textual criticism, one of the things about the New Testament that is really good is the fact that there is such a large number of manuscripts of the New Testament. We have literally thousands of Greek manuscripts over five, almost six thousand of them. We have manuscripts in other languages as well, the versions, so that one of the problems of finding the correct reading in the New Testament is the fact that so many manuscripts of this ancient writing exist. That is wholly unknown for any other ancient writing. In fact, we do not have the original of any ancient writing. And we do not have the originals of the New Testament. But we have many copies, many more copies of the New Testament than other ancient writings. And furthermore, the difference of time between the manuscripts dates and the original is smaller in reference to the New Testament than any other ancient writing as well. So, we have a better attested text of the New Testament than we have of any ancient writing.

But nevertheless, it is necessary to apply textual criticism to the copies that we have and the Authorized Version is a version based upon probably inferior manuscripts. And for that reason most of the more modern versions have made certain changes in the text. This is probably a verse that is not genuine. The 5th verse reads,

“And a certain man was there who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, ‘Do you wish to get well?’ The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Arise, take up your pallet and walk.’ And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was

cured, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.’ But he answered them, ‘He who made me well was the one who said to me, “Take up your pallet and walk.”’ They asked him, ‘Who is the man who said to you, “Take up your pallet and walk?”’ But he who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.’ The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, ‘My Father is working up until now, and I Myself am working.’ For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

That last statement is a very, very important statement and gives us an understanding of what it really meant for Jesus Christ to call himself the Son of God. I hadn’t intended to say anything about this in the message. But it is frequently true that people, particularly in the false cults, will say to believing Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and therefore equal with God, “We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. But we just don’t believe that Jesus is God.”

Now you can see from this that when our Lord called God his own Father, when he said, “My Father,” that was for them a clear confession of the fact that he was equal with God. For part of it fundamentally is that no one can be the unique Son of God unless he possesses the nature of God. And thus, the statement, “My Father,” was recognized by him to be a confession that his essence and the Father’s essence were one in the same. That is a very significant statement. This is one of the reasons why Jesus Christ was crucified because he did make that confession. Not simply that he was a son of God, but the unique, equal with the Father, Son of God. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

In John chapter 5, we have the third of the miraculous signs performed by the Lord Jesus Christ, which it is John’s purpose to unfold in his gospel. Remember he has said in chapter 20 and verse 30 and 31 that the Lord Jesus did many other signs than those that he has described in this book. In fact, John later says so many that the world couldn’t contain the books if he had written them all. “But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that in believing you might have life through His name.” So the miracles that are described in the Gospel of John are not simply described in order to show that our Lord possesses supernatural power. They are signs. That is, they are miracles of supernatural power, but they are designed to express spiritual truth. In that sense, the signs of the Gospel of John are parables. That is, they are incidents which are true historically. But they have as their goal the expression of certain spiritual truth.

The healing of the impotent man is the third of these signs and it is a miracle, that is, a parable, of impotence and omnipotence. One of the most remarkable and one of the most blessed things about it is the fact that it expresses in a way hope for all of us. What we are now is not the only thing possible for us. Here is a man who for thirty-eight years had been in his sickness and who was a thoroughly frustrated man. He might have thought that this is the only thing that I shall ever experience in this life. But oh how wrong he was. So what we are now is not the only thing that is possible. Or, to put it in other words, our cases are not closed. As long as we are breathing, there may be change.

I have a good friend who likes to say as long as we are living everything is optimism. Because, of course, God, if he were really through with us, would bring us home. But the fact that we are still alive means that we may still be useful. Looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it makes all things possible. Paul said, “I can do all things through him who keeps on pouring his power into me,” Philippians 4:13. Well, the impotent man did not know the meaning of that, but I’m sure that ultimately he came to understand something about it.

John chapter 5 is one of the better chapters in the Gospel of John, in my opinion. All of them are good, of course. But some, I think, are better than others. This is one of the better ones. We have this wonderful miracle and then we have a remarkable message delivered by our Lord after the sign. I want to, in the time that we have, emphasize three remarks made by our Lord.

Now we'll go through the account, but I'll lay a little stress on these three remarks. And the first is found in verse 6 when he said to the impotent man, “Do you wish to get well?” And then the second of his remarks is found in the 8th verse where he says, “Arise, take up your pallet and walk.” And then the third of the remarks is found in verse 14 when our Lord says, after finding the impotent man in the temple, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.” We have a word of preparation for the miracle, a word of restoration and then a word of admonition.

Now looking at the account, as in most of these incidents in which our Lord performs a mighty work, there are some important characters. The character who stands out, of course always is our Lord. But here we have another character who stands out and that is the impotent man. John says that he had been by the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years in his sickness.

Some who have bent towards allegory have come at it upon the fact that Israel was thirty-eight years in the wilderness. And that perhaps this incident is told with that in mind. Since Israel was in the wilderness and then was ultimately delivered by the Lord, the impotent man is designed to represent Israel in their unbelief and also to represent the possibility of restoration to their place as the head of the nations. But nothing is really said about that in the account. And so it would probably be wiser to say nothing more than the fact that some who with allegorical bent of mind have made something over it.

Here is a man who as one of my old New Testament professors, Everett Harrison said “he lived in prison without bars.” Thirty-eight years by the side of that pool. And never had he, according to his testimony, been able to get into the pool when the water was stirring.

By the way, as the text is before me in the New American Standard Bible, there is no indication that there was an angel who stirred the waters. In other words, so far as this text is concerned, the apostle did not necessarily believe that that was true, that an angel stirred the water at certain time, although it is true that men did believe that. But here is a man then who had been by the side of the waters. He did believe that when they were stirred, if someone managed to get into the water, then he would find healing. But he had never been able to because he was a lame man and unable to move. And it was first come, first serve, so far as the stirring of the waters were concerned and he was never able to make it.

He's somewhat of an unlovely character, according to this account. In the first place, Jesus said to him “Stop sinning, lest a worse thing befall you,” after he has been healed. So evidently he was a man who was like the rest of us, a known sinner. Furthermore, he was a man whom no one wanted to help. That's rather strange because you would have thought that someone would have gone out of their way to be sure that this man got in the pool at the right time. But no one evidently wanted to help him enough to get him in. It's possible he was a very ungrateful kind of person. The fact that a person is afflicted in some way does not necessarily mean that their characters are loving and kindly.

Now it seems that he's somewhat ungrateful because after he is healed and the Jews ask him “Who is the one who told you to take up your pallet and walk,” he didn't even know his name. You would've thought that after our Lord had healed him he at least would've said “Well, what's your name? Who are you?” But he never even bothered to get his name. And furthermore, when the Jews inquire about it and then when Jesus finds him in the temple again, he quickly goes to the Jews and tells them it was Jesus. And surely he must have been able to tell by the attitude that they expressed when they asked him who it was that they were not very favorable to the things that our Lord was doing. So, he does appear as a somewhat unlovely character in the story.

The other person who is important, of course, is our Lord. How he knew that this man had been for thirty-eight years in this state the text does not say. It's possible that someone had told him.

As he came to the pool of Bethesda, one of the disciples may have said to him, “That man’s been out here for a long time. Some say thirty-eight years.” It’s possible also that he knew this because his own divine nature communicated that information to his human nature. There were certain things that the divine nature did not communicate to our Lord’s human nature. One of those, the time of the coming. For Jesus himself said he did not know the time of the second coming.

Now in his divine nature and divine personality, he did. But, so far as his human nature was concerned, what he knew in his human nature was what was communicated to him by the divine person through the divine nature. So, it’s possible that the divine nature had not communicated that to his human nature. Of course, it’s also possible that the divine nature had communicated it to his human nature. So, we don’t really know how definitely it is that Jesus knew that he had been there for thirty-eight years. But the text says, “When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition.”

We are inclined in the light of the emphasis of the Gospel of John, I think, at least I’m inclined, I’m not going to speak for you, but I am inclined to think that just as he knew Nathaniel when he was sitting under the fig tree and just as he knew that the woman of Samaria didn’t have a husband, but had actually had about five, so he knew the condition of this man. And that is, he knew it because his divine nature had communicated it to him. He knew this supernaturally. But it may have been simply that the Father communicated this to him as the mediator, his obedient Son, as he carries out his mediatorial work. The point is of interest to theologians, but perhaps is not significant for the story. “When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been already a long time in that condition.”

Here comes the fundamental question. This is the basic question to be answered by every individual in one way or another. “Do you wish to get well?” That might seem to be a foolish question to a man who has been lying by the side of a pool for thirty-eight years. The answer to that might seem to be obvious. “Do you wish to get well?” Why, of course. Why am I lying by this

pool? Why am I waiting here for thirty-eight years for someone to push me in the water when the waters are being stirred?

Incidentally, this pool is probably located near St. Anne’s Church in Jerusalem and there, there is a fresco and you can see an angel stirring the waters. That, of course, is later than this time. There is no evidence of any spring underneath where the pool probably was and so, it may have been an ancient spring was there or it may have been that it was filled with water from another source. And so, whenever the water was piped in when it was being piped in, the waters would stir a bit and that accounted for the comments about the angels stirring the water and if one was in the pool at that time, then they might be healed.

But it might be a foolish question, might seem to be a foolish question, “Do you wish to get well?” In fact, some have suggested that this is like the world’s tantalizing gospels. Walk that you might be healed. That’s what they tell us in the world, you know. If we want to have forgiveness of sins, then do this and do that. Well that, of course, is the thing we cannot do. That’s why we need the forgiveness of our sins because we cannot do the things that we are required to do. When Jesus said to the rich young ruler and also to the lawyer when he was asked the question “What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life,” he said “Keep the law.” Well, that’s the thing that we cannot do. We cannot do that. We cannot keep the law.

Now if those men had replied to the Lord, “We cannot keep the law,” then he would have said, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in all Israel,” an understanding of the nature of man because we cannot keep the law. We cannot carry out the world’s gospels which are “Do this in order that you might be healed.” “Get up and walk so that you might be healed.” What amazes me is that weakness often gains the pity and aid of others, but this man had evidently no aid whatsoever. He has the excuses, but no one has bothered to help him. So, the Lord replies to him, “Arise, take up your pallet and walk.”

By the way, I should have mentioned this. That when he said to this man “Do you wish to get well,” I said that was the basic question to be answered by us all. That’s really the question that

God asks every one of us with reference to the forgiveness of our sins. Do you really wish to get well? That might seem to be a tantalizing worldly kind of question too. Why certainly everybody does. But that, of course, is not true. Men do not wish to get well. As a matter of fact, men don't even realize that they're lame and halt and blind and sick and unable to heal themselves. It's obvious they don't understand their condition and they do not want to be changed. If so, there would be great crowds flocking to hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that they might get well spiritually. So that's really a question for every one of us. Do you really wish to get well? Do you wish to have the forgiveness of sins? Do you wish to have a relationship with the eternal God? That's a very fundamental question, isn't it? Do you wish to get well?

The response is “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” You can tell from his response he doesn't understand much because he's more interested in the means by which he might be healed than in the person who is speaking with him. Evidently, the impact of our Lord's personality had not come home to him yet. There were others who looked upon the face of our Lord and immediately knew that he was different from everybody else. You can find illustrations of that in the New Testament, I think. But here is a man who is not so much interested in the Lord as he is in the means by which he might be healed. That reminds me of people who are not interested in the Lord himself, but are interested in religion. They feel that if they can just get some religion, then everything will be alright.

Yesterday I was reading a paper that is put out by a well-known analyst of economic news and he's a Jewish man and he said that a number of people have written him and asked him what his spiritual condition is. And he expatiates upon it for several paragraphs in this publication. Someone had sent it to me to read and so I was reading it and it was interesting to read because he was a man who had had a lot of unusual experiences and he had finally come to realize he said that he needed more than just the kind of relationship that people have when they live out their lives here on the earth. And he said he had come to understand too that there were some things more important than money. And he had come to understand that man does not live by bread alone, which he said some

wise man had said. But then he cited a word from the Lord Jesus. He said “Jesus said so and so and he was certainly right,” so he said. He had religion. And you could tell from reading the paragraph that he now thought that everything was perfectly all right with him because he had religion. Like this man, he is more interested in the means than he is in the person behind it. Sometimes we’re interested in the religion, we’re interested in the preacher, we’re interested in the church, we’re interested in our good resolutions, our good works, our culture, all of these things that we substitute for faith in the person who gave himself as a sacrifice on the cross at Calvary.

So, he still has not advanced very far. Jesus then gives the word of restoration to him in the 8th verse. “Arise, take up your pallet and walk.” Those of you that are students of the Greek text, we do have some in the audience, this is a rather interesting statement because it probably is an illustration of a present tense of an aoristic character, arise. That is, it expresses action as an event, decisive action. “Take up your pallet.” That’s decisive. That tense is that tense. “Take up your pallet.” “Arise, take up your pallet.” In other words, decisive action, the healing will be prompt. We used to say when we were kids, or at least I used to hear my mother saying, “Do that as quick as Jack Robinson,” or something like that. I remember Jack Robinson and it was not the Jackie Robinson who played baseball later on either. “Take up your bed and walk.”

Now notice the kind of healing that Jesus performs is over against the healings performed by the faith healers today. This was an immediate healing and a perfect healing performed by the word of Jesus Christ. “Arise, take up your bed and walk.” And it was such a perfect healing that the man who was being carried by the pallet gets up quickly and carries off his bed. “And walk.” That’s a term that means simply to go on walking and is expressive of the whole life that the man will now live now that he has been healed. His healing is permanent. “Arise, decisively take up your bed and go on walking.” Our Lord’s commands are his enablements.

What is our response to something like this? To say amazing? Well, that’s one response we might make. But the response that John would have us make is to realize that this individual who has said this with reference to this impotent man is the kind of person who also says to us spiritually,

“Rise up from your sick bed and walk.” And that, I think, is the response that he would love for us to have. Confidence in Christ’s cross for salvation. And once we see that he has died for sinners and we have come to the conviction by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, that we are sinners, to receive that saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, rise up from our sickness spiritually in sin and go on walking with new life to the glory of God. That, I think, is the response that John would have us make. For he said, these signs are given that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that in believing you might have life through His name.” So here is a man who had new physical life, but that’s what he would have us to come to experience spiritually, new spiritual life. Well, the consequences are that he immediately became well. And he took up his pallet and he walked off.

I’ve wondered as I’ve read this how much faith did this man have. So far as you can tell, afterwards there is no clear indication that he understood at this time that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. But he had enough faith to respond to the word. And in essence, at least, since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, he had come to faith to hear the word of Jesus Christ and respond to it. And that may be enough for us to say that his faith was essentially a faith in Jesus Christ.

Well, what follows is rather interesting. It was the Sabbath when this was performed. And the Jews saw this fellow going off carrying his pallet. And they immediately said to him, “Look, it’s the Sabbath day. It’s not permissible for you to carry your pallet. God says that you’re not to carry anything on the Sabbath day like that.” They appeal to passages like Jeremiah chapter 17 and Nehemiah chapter 13 and more generally to the statements in the Old Testament that the Sabbath day was a day that was to be kept holy. The Jews were told that they were not to move furniture on the Sabbath day. You couldn’t do that. I guess if I had observed the Sabbath properly, I would’ve remembered this morning to put my watch forward because I was moving furniture last night at 2:30 or 2:00 in my study moving my books around in the bookcase rearranging them. That’s not as good as reading them, but it’s getting close to them anyway. Incidentally, they also debated whether it was

possible for a man who had a wooden leg to walk on the Sabbath day because that might be carrying a burden. I imagine that this man would have replied if he was pushed into a corner, “The man who heals on the Sabbath day has a right to command me to do whatever he wants to and I should obey him because it’s obvious he is in thorough accord with heaven because otherwise he could not heal a person from his sickness.” But this fellow is not a hero. He’ll soon blurt out the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Jews. He’s not the kind of fellow who immediately was attached to our Lord.

You know, in that, I think he also illustrates us because there are some people who do have a fundamental faith in our Lord who are not really attached, not very attached to him. They don’t mind doing things that the Bible says are really wrong even though their fundamental faith is in the Lord because they’ve not yet come to a fuller appreciation of our Lord and his word.

Well, they have a little conversation that’s rather interesting. You can almost catch the mood of the Jews and the mood of the man. He said, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, Take up your pallet and walk.” And they say, “Who is the man (They don’t say – notice now. They don’t say “Who is the man who healed you?” They would’ve choked if they had said that. But they say), “Who is the man who said to you, “Take up your pallet and walk?”” You can see they don’t want to say “Who is the man who healed you” because they really don’t like to think in their minds that he might have done something supernatural with the help of God. So, they put it the other way.

Now the man said, “I don’t even know his name.” Now he perhaps had looked around afterwards, but our Lord had slipped away. He had vanished in the crowd. He didn’t even know his name. You would’ve thought that he would’ve done everything that he possibly could to find out who it was that had healed him. And in the light of our Lord’s well-known miracles, even at this point, someone must have said to him, “It probably was Jesus. Did he look like so and so?” And he could’ve known that it was. But he’s not all that grateful.

Well he went over to the temple at least and our Lord found him in the temple and the Lord spoke to him and said, “Behold, you’ve become well; don’t sin anymore, so that nothing worse may

befall you.” I think this is a very important statement. It tells us that when a person has been healed by the Lord Jesus Christ, he expects that the life should have a change.

Now we are taught in the New Testament that when a person comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that there is a definitive change in his whole being. He becomes a new person. He’s given a new nature. And, in fact, John the Apostle says that “a person who has been regenerated does not practice sin. He does not go on sinning.” In other words, the bent of his life changes. That does not mean, of course, that a believer does not, upon occasion, sin. He may actually for a time fall into sin as a carnal Christian. But even that cannot persist because God’s discipline ultimately means that an individual who participates in his sin as a believer experiences the ultimate discipline of the sleep of physical death.

Now when Jesus spoke to this man he said, “You’ve become well. Stop sinning. Do not go on sinning any longer.” There are people who tell us that they really do have the forgiveness of their sins because they have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they confess that their life has not been changed. And others who observe their life also notice no change whatsoever.

Now, of course, there may be changes that we do not see. And therefore, it is not for fellow believers to examine the fruit on someone else’s fruit tree. It’s possible that individuals are actually being fruitful, but we don’t see it. So that’s not the ultimate standard. But the Lord does say, “By their fruits you shall know them.” That principle is biblical. And there are individuals whose lives clearly manifest constant disobedience to the word of God. So, what’s the value of being sound on the atonement if the atonement does not make a sound?

So our Lord says, “You have been healed. Stop sinning any longer, so that nothing worse may befall you.” That, I think, is interesting too. Not only has the Lord Jesus said that a revised version of our life is the necessary response to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but he warns this individual if that does not take place, there is a possibility that something worse may befall them. Worse than what? Thirty-eight years of torture? Thirty-eight years of frustration? Thirty-eight years by the side of that pool and no one getting him into the pool in time?

There are people who think that this is the only place in which we suffer hell, while we're here on the earth. This is the only hell that we shall ever suffer. Ah, what a misunderstanding that is of the Bible. Jesus said, “You're well. Stop sinning any longer in order that a worse thing might not befall you.” There is something worse. There's something worse than the worst kind of life that an individual could possibly have to live. And that's the lake of fire. The Bible is very plain about that. The Bible does teach that there is a hell, there is such a thing as damnation and though the world may make fun of the preachers of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ who preach “hellfire and damnation,” that is what the Bible does teach. They are being true to the Scriptures when they do. It's possible, of course, to preach such things with the wrong spirit. We should remember that we're dealing with individuals, with significant individuals, and we should preach that there is an eternal judgment to come with the love of God. But here is something from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ that is a very solemn and serious thing. “Don't sin anymore so that nothing worse may befall you.” Worse than thirty-eight years torment, worse than thirty-eight years of hell on earth, is hell in the lake of fire.

Well the man went away and when he left the Lord after that statement he went immediately to the Jews and told them “It was Jesus who healed me. I saw him in the temple.” I'm sure he didn't tell them these other words that he spoke to him. But nevertheless he told them. And the Jews continued their persecution of the Lord because he was doing these things.

Now, the text in John 5:16 says, “He was doing these things on the Sabbath.” So, we would gather that this is just an incident out of other incidents similar to them that John is describing more fully.

Now our Lord answers the Jews because they had criticized him in his presence and they had criticized him behind his back and so he knew their criticisms and John repeats the essence of the response of the Lord to it. He says, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. I am in union with the Father and he is busy doing his work and he works on every day of the week.

The God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And I work because he works. I am his servant. I am in union with him. I am the mediator. He is carrying out this divine program.”

Now notice. When he says, “My Father is working,” that was too much for his opponents. “For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” If men do not understand what it means for the Lord Jesus to refer to himself as the Son of God, those did, they understood that to claim to be the Son of God, the unique Son of God, was to claim to be possessed of deity. “Made himself equal with God.”

Well, what shall we say by way of conclusion? This picture is a picture of sinners. Here is a pool, around it are gathered a number of people who had been there for a lengthy period of time, they are described as individuals who were sick, blind, lame, withered. What beautiful pictures of us spiritually. Blind, why Paul says that we are blinded in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18. Lame, he says “We walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air before we come to know Jesus Christ.” Withered, we grieve the Holy Spirit constantly. We also live lives that are contrary to the word of God. In fact, spiritually, we are unable to see. The gospel makes no sense to us. It seems totally foolish. We are unable to walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. We displease him with every thought that we have and all of our activities are contrary to his word because they arise out of selfishness and they are not directed toward the glory of God, but rather toward our own glory ultimately. And we cannot work for the glory of God because we do not have the life of God. But this parable of omnipotence also teaches us that the Lord Jesus is able to help just such people.

Isn't it strange that we take our bodies to the springs, but we leave our souls by the sewers? One of the significant things of the Germans is that they love to go to those baths. All the Germans, if they possibly can, once a year go to the baths in order to minister to their physical body. But how often we neglect to minister to our souls? Some of us have been thirty-eight years, forty years, forty-five years. And we have not ministered to our spirits at all.

And in the experience of this man is a picture of what our Lord is able to do. He’s able to say, “Rise,” giving you new life. He’s able to say, “Take up your bed,” giving you new power. And he’s able to you to say, “Walk,” so that your life can be transformed and you can walk to the glory of God and your life may become useful and fruitful and profitable and ultimately significant for the ages of eternity.

Are there some here in that condition? Lame, withered, halt, blind? Well, maybe you haven’t been by the pool thirty-eight years. There’s no need to wait thirty-eight years. Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, do not be like those of whom our Lord speaks in a moment “And ye will not come unto me that Me, that ye may have life.” May God give you the grace to recognize your condition and come to him. And for those of you who have already come remember our Lord’s word of exhortation. “You’ve been made well. Stop sinning, so that a worse thing may not befall you.” May the Lord give us understanding in these things for the glory of his name.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for this wonderful miracle which our Lord performed so many hundreds of years ago, but which still speaks to us in 1982. We are of the impotent ones naturally. He is the omnipotent savior. Oh Father, may he truly speak to us, “Rise. Take up your bed and walk.” May there be some in this audience responsive to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself a sacrifice for our sins in his blood on Calvary’s cross making it possible for him to forgive sins and give life. May there be some prayer right at this moment prayed, here or over the radio. Oh God, I know that I am a sinner. I thank Thee for that which Jesus Christ has done. I receive as a free gift eternal life...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]